

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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CONGRESS PASSES MARKEY AMENDMENT TO PREVENT FUNDS FOR TORTURE

WASHINGTON, DC- Congress took a critical step towards ending the U.S. policy of outsourcing torture today, passing an amendment, offered by Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), prohibiting the use any funds included in the supplemental bill to be used to the contravention of legal obligations under the Convention Against Torture, with a virtually unanimous bipartisan vote (420-Yays, 2-Nays, 3-Present).

“Today, we moved one step closer to ending the U.S. practice of ‘outsourcing torture.’ The passage of this amendment reaffirms our commitment to upholding the Convention Against Torture,” said Rep. Markey.

The resounding bipartisan support for this amendment comes in the wake of public outrage at the CIA practice of sending suspects to prisons in countries around the world that are known to violate human rights. Fifty three Members of Congress and numerous human rights and law associations are endorsing H. R. 952, the Torture Outsourcing Prevention Act – authored by Rep. Markey, a bill that would permanently end the current practice of rendering prisoners to countries that have been determined by the U.S. State Department to routinely engage in torture, and bar reliance on “diplomatic assurances” from countries that practice torture as the basis for rendering persons to that country. Today’s amendment offered by Rep. Markey only affects funding in the Supplemental Appropriations bill, a critical first step towards ending U.S. tacit endorsement of torture, but the next step would be to end the use of “diplomatic assurances” in order to send prisoners into the hands of known torturers.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Human Rights First issued a joint statement supporting the Markey amendment opposing the outsourcing of torture.

“The current U.S. program to transfer detainees to countries outside of any lawful process through “renditions” places individuals in direct threat of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in contravention of federal and international law. This practice is inhumane and unacceptable. Several individuals who were transferred by the United States into the hands of foreign officials were reportedly tortured during detention and interrogation and have since been released without charge. The passage of the Markey amendment is an important step in the process of ending torture, and we look

forward to working with Representative Markey and Congress to pass the Torture Outsourcing Prevention Act.”

This Congressional commitment to ending torture comes as the NY Times reported on U.S. failures to address torture in military prisons in several countries and new Bush Administration plans to render thousands of prisoners from Guantanamo Bay. Prisoners rendered to other countries from Guantanamo Bay would be covered under the funding restrictions set forth in Rep. Markey’s amendment, if supplemental appropriations funds were used for that purpose and would also be addressed by the standards set in the proposed under the Torture Outsourcing Prevention Act.

“The war against terrorism includes a war against those who engage in torture. If we fight our enemy using the same inhumane and morally bankrupt techniques that we are trying to stop, we will simply become what we have beheld. This amendment reaffirming our commitment to end the practice of torture is just the beginning. We are not going to stop until we have closed the hypocritical chapter in American history where we participate in torture by proxy. Torture is unacceptable and the U.S. has a responsibility to take the lead in ending this practice,” said Rep. Markey.

Please see attached floor statement from Rep. Ed Markey or for more information on his work to end the practice of ‘outsourcing torture’ - <http://www.house.gov/markey/>

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